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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: OMAN INCREASES PUBLIC AWARENESS OF TIP

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Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: Two recent articles in prominent Arabic language news outlets sought to increase public understanding of issues related to Trafficking in Persons (TIP). These comments by government and religious authorities in the tightly regulated Omani press are evidence of a new effort by the government to raise public awareness as the USG has asked. Both articles appealed to Islamic beliefs as the basis for action against TIP and related abuses, an approach that will resonate here. Post will continue to follow this issue closely. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In a July 5 article in the state owned Arabic language newspaper, "Oman", entitled "Internet and Trafficking in Persons", Dr. Hussain bin Sa'id bin Saif al-Ghafri, Legal Advisor to the Information Technology Authority (ITA) condemned TIP and called for further laws to combat cyber-related TIP crimes. He outlines a definition of TIP, the international and religious prohibitions against TIP, and the role of the Internet in TIP crimes. His closing call was for the evaluation of existing laws to ensure proper regulations for cyber TIP.

¶3. (U) Al-Ghafri described TIP as a "disgusting practice" which has been around for ages. He recalled the practice of slavery for prisoners of war in ancient civilizations, which he said had given way to current day practice, in which "TIP is caused by victims' dire economic conditions, which are then exploited by transnational organized crimes." He noted that Islam outlaws all causes leading to enslavement and encouraged freeing those enslaved, as well as the plethora of international conventions condemning the practice.

¶4. (U) He said, "TIP is the third most profitable illegal trade in the world, after drug trafficking and illegal arms trade. Every year, a large number of people, mainly women and children, are trafficked trans-nationally. In addition, there are people who are trafficked within the country for the purposes of prostitution, and forced labor. By its very nature, this trade violates human dignity and exploits those in need. It is a new slavery that exploits victims who were forced, or deceived, or coerced to work or to offer sexual services. TIP poses several threats: it deprives victims of their human rights and freedoms, and more importantly it poses an international health risk and increases transnational crimes."

¶5. (U) Al-Ghafri goes on to define TIP as any illegal act that turns a human being into a commodity or a victim exploited by brokers and professional criminals across borders to be forced to work, or offer sex, whether this act was based on the consent of the victim by forcing the victim or any other enslavement-like

method. He goes on to define the commodity (the victim), the broker (the trafficker) and the market (source, destination and transit countries). He then outlines the potential for the Internet to be used in trafficking related crimes.

¶6. (U) Also, in a July 13 article in the private, youth oriented Arabic language daily al-Shabiba, Oman's Grand Mufti, H.E. Shaikh Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalil, addressed potential abuse of domestic workers. He said "families must be very cautious when dealing with domestic servant issues. Men are not permitted to approach women domestic servants in any way without their permission. For example, men should always ask permission in case there is a need for entering the housemaid's room. Families are encouraged to employ women domestic servants who share the same family values as our society to limit cultural misunderstanding."

HURTADO